

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S
TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

by

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The student of medieval literature soon recognizes a need for an understanding of the tradition of Courtly Love, which appears in several major literary works of the era and which has evidently influenced modern man's attitude toward woman. The majority view held by scholars on the subject of Courtly Love is that something happened in Europe about the eleventh century which began to change man's views toward woman. The appearance of French and Provençal poetry is one of the great historical facts of the close of the eleventh century; the spirit of chivalry which characterizes these love lyrics is the basis of the European lyric poetry which followed. Brinley Rhys states that the "usual scholarly concept of courtly love fills a definite need; if it did not exist we should have to invent it."¹ The usual scholarly concept is that the poetry of the troubadours of Provençal speaks of love as an ennobling experience, though adulterous, for through his beloved the lover is offered a transcendent experience. "It is this power of transformation which, more than anything else, constitutes the distinguishing characteristic of Courtly Love, a love which both as a literary theme and as a social ideal is something entirely new on the European scene, and from which our modern notions of love derive in large measure. Without Courtly Love the tragic passionate love of the modern novel and the theatre would be hard to explain. Love has influenced

men's deepest attitude toward the other sex, our unquestioned sense of courtesy in the West, our persistent, if socially crystallized, deference toward women."² The equal status idea also comes from this ideal, for in the relationship between the courtly lovers, not social position but "intrinsic worth determined the mutual acceptability of the partners."³

The major document for establishing the existence of such an ideal is The Art of Courtly Love, written by Andreas Capellanus at the direction and command of Marie of Champagne in the twelfth century. It is generally accepted that this treatise reflects "what may easily have been, in courtly circles, the usual social ideal (more or less lived up to) in Northern France of the late twelfth century."⁴ Andreas is considered the authority, and his work is one of the prime pieces of evidence in support of Courtly Love as a way of life, at least as a game, in the courtly circles of Provence.

The concern of this paper is the courtly lover of the crown piece of all medieval works on the theme of Courtly Love, Troilus and Criseyde by Geoffrey Chaucer, as seen by Chaucer's audience, which viewed the courtly lover very differently from the modern audience. When asked to name the protagonist of the Troilus, the modern reader usually chooses Criseyde, who seems to be typical woman: woman who adjusts to the expedience of time and circumstance. Occasionally Pandarus, the clever go-between who manipulates both Troilus and Criseyde, is chosen. A teacher from a college in western Kansas indicated

during a seminar at Kansas State University in the summer of 1967 that the female contingent in his class overwhelmingly chose Diomedes as the hero. But seldom, it seems, does anyone consider Troilus himself as anything more than a milk-sop sentimentalist, a young man in love with love and with himself, behaving in the fashion acceptable only for a young teenager in the throes of his first crush. For such readers Troilus is not even a man, much less the hero of the poem. Intolerable is his weeping, for in modern times the Anglo-Saxon tradition does not allow a man to cry. Ridiculous are his hours of solitude and his lengthy soliloquies. Hilarious are his letters to Criseyde which are bathed in salty tears, the pillow which he embraces in Criseyde's absence, and the manipulating, overseeing Pandarus who controls every move of the lovers. C.S. Lewis tells us that Troilus' "humility, his easy tears, and his unabashed self-pity in adversity will not be admired in our own age."⁵ Because his behavior is so far removed from what the modern reader believes to be normal, or at least acceptable, it seems to be difficult to see Troilus as the hero.

While further study is planned to determine the typical, acceptable, admirable behavior of young people of the courts in the Middle Ages, based on the records of medieval doctors, historians and poets, the present study, serving as an introduction to the more extensive study, seeks to demonstrate that for Chaucer's audience Troilus was behaving properly, in accord

with the expected behavior of the courtly lover. First a brief survey will be made of the accounts of certain medieval physicians and historians to suggest the norms of behavior for a lover in Chaucer's day. Then a brief examination will be made of selected medieval works: The Book of the Knight of la Tour Landry; Sir John Froissart's Chronicles (of France, England, Spain, etc.); Chretien de Troyes' Lancelot and Guenevere; and John Gower's Confessio Amantis. Parallels with the Troilus will be shown with each of the aforementioned works.

One approach to understanding the ideal of Courtly Love is to be found in medieval and renaissance medical records and commentary. An excellent study of the English disease of love melancholy is to be found in Lawrence Babb's The Elizabethan Malady. While he applies his findings to Elizabethan literature, his conclusions apply equally well to the medieval literature of Courtly Love. The link is established by John Livingston Lowes' study of the view of medieval physicians toward the malady called amor heroycus, or hereos, which is mentioned in Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale."⁶ Lowes lists such famous physicians as Bernard at Montpellier, Gatesden, Gilbertyn, and the Arabs Razi and Avicenna. He gives credit to Robert Burton of the seventeenth century for having the last account of the malady in The Anatomy of Melancholy. Lowes thinks that Andreas' definition of the malady of love is essentially that of the medical writers,

and that medieval literature must be read in light of such evidence of the actual existence of the malady.

Babb tells us that "Galen refers several times to love as a disease, and there are indications in Galen's works that the lover's malady had long been a subject of medical concern."⁷ Several times Troilus' condition is referred to as a "maladie" or as "melancolye."⁸ The common names for the malady are "erotic love," "heroical love," and "love melancholy," according to Babb, who emphasizes that "medieval medical writers regularly devote a chapter to love. . . . Medieval writers . . . usually characterize it as a melancholic ailment."⁹

The medieval belief in the four humours is well established. Erotic love is associated with sanguinity, since it is a warm and moist passion. When there is an abundance of blood in the body, an abundance of sperm also occurs, inclining men to love, to an amorous disposition. Since love is a warm passion, it causes the heart to emit and to produce more blood. The lover becomes uncomfortably hot, and the heat may become so fierce as to be mortal. Robert Burton, in that compendium of knowledge, The Anatomy of Melancholy, after telling us that "they who are in love are sick,"¹⁰ states that the part most affected in men is the liver, and goes on to give account of an autopsy done on a victim of the malady which showed extensive damage to the liver, heart, and brain.

While love melancholy begins as a sanguine disease, it progresses to become a melancholy one, if not relieved by

consummation or medical intervention. In fact, the patient may be led by his physical and mental distresses to his death. The cause of the disease is unsatisfied love; as the lover dwells on the charms of his beloved and upon his own hopes, fears, and despairs, heat and moisture are consumed. The intensity of the emotions, the lover's insomnia, indigestion, and unevacuated seed, all the results of thwarted love, contribute to the cooling and drying of the lover's body, evidence that the melancholy humours have been engendered.

In Troilus' first song, after he has been smitten by Cupid's arrow, he wonders, "Allas! what is this wondre maladie?/ For hete of cold, for cold of hete, I dye" (I, 419-420). After Troilus receives a letter from Criseyde in answer to his own, the narrator tells us that "So thorough this lettre, which that she hym sente,/ Encressen gan desir, of which he brente" (II, 336-337).

Some of the symptoms of love melancholy, as listed by both Babb and Burton, who seem to quote everybody else who has written on the subject, are weeping, sighing and sobbing. The lover stands as if in deep contemplation; he cannot converse coherently; his moods are extremely variable. Further, he is heedless of his personal appearance; he loves solitude; he is given to passionate soliloquy. As appetite is lost he becomes lean and hollow-eyed. His skin becomes pale and strangely discolored because of the disrupted humours in his body. His heartbeat is unsteady, and his pulse becomes erratic

at the very mention of his beloved. Some mental derangement occurs; he is obsessed with his mistress and deluded into believing she is perfect. Sometimes he even goes mad, paying court to his own shadow, or having to be chained to prevent injury to himself or others. Many lovers commit suicide, while others merely waste away and die. Burton speaks of dying for love as being so common that there is no need to prove it; death is the usual catastrophe for those whose love is unfulfilled.

Gregory Zilboorg, in A History of Medical Psychology, reports a case study done in 1604 by Jacques Ferrand, a French doctor whom Zilboorg regards as having an almost fully modern psychiatric mind and whose empirical methods he praises.

. . . Ferrand was consulted about a young man whom he had known previously as a cheerful, energetic person. He found him very sad, depressed. A change of scene made his condition only worse. Dr. Ferrand was palpating the young man's pulse when a good-looking young girl happened to enter the room carrying with her a lamp. Ferrand noticed that the pulse of his patient at once became irregular; his face grew pale. Ferrand guessed where the trouble lay and the patient confessed. The family objected to marriage as the solution of his trouble. Ferrand took charge of the boy and obtained a successful cure. From that time on Ferrand devoted a great deal of energy to the study of similar disorders. "Some people,"

he said, "treat melancholias and other manias caused by love in the very same way as they treat other melancholias and madmen without considering the true cause and seat of the disease." . . . Ferrand consulted every possible book on the subject and as a result published in 1612 a treatise . . . entitled La Maladie d'Amour ou Melancolie Erotique.¹¹

Numerous instances of the above characteristics may be cited for Troilus. On his return to his chamber after having seen Criseyde and being smitten by Love's arrow, he sits down on the foot of his bed and "first he gan to sike, and eft to grone" (I, 360). At Deiphebus' house, Troilus plans just what to say and how to say it when Pandarus shall bring Criseyde to see him. But when she arrives his plans go astray. First he seems about to weep as he says, "Ha, a, . . . / Where me be wo, O myghty God, thow woost!/Who is al ther? I se nought trewely" (III, 65-68). The narrator tells us that he is speechless when Criseyde thanks him for his assistance and beseeches his continued help: "And sire, his lessoun, that he wende konne / To preyen hire, is thorough his wit ironne" (III, 83-84). When he finally speaks again, his voice quaking and his hue turning from red to white and back again, all he can manage is, twice, "Mercy, mercy, swete herte!" (III, 98). When the rumor goes out that Calkas has proposed to exchange Antenor for Criseyde, Pandarus arranges for Troilus and

Criseyde to spend a night together. She is so upset that she falls into a trance and appears to be dead. Unable to rouse her, and concluding that she is dead, Troilus draws his sword to slay himself so that his soul may follow hers; Criseyde awakes just in time to prevent the deed. After hearing Parliament's decision to make the exchange, Troilus returns to his solitary chamber where he becomes "ful lik a ded ymage, pale and wan; / And in his brest the heped wo began / Out breste. . . ." (IV, 235-237). Then he dashes about his chamber like a wild bull, "smyting his brest ay with his fistes smerte; / His hed to the wall, his body to the grounde / Ful ofte he swapte, hymselfen to confound" (IV, 243-245). Finally, after cursing Calkas for taking Criseyde from him, he falls into a trance (IV, 343). Having waited for Criseyde not only the ten days she had promised, but an additional ten and more, Troilus ". . . ne et ne drank, for his malencolye, / And ek from every compaignye he fledde. . . . / So was he lene, and thereto pale and wan, / And feble, that he walketh by potente" (cane or crutch), (V, 1216-1222).

The foregoing discussion reveals that love melancholy was commonplace to the people who composed Chaucer's audience, and that they would accept as normal and natural the behavior of Troilus, the courtly lover.

Another approach to understanding the influence of Courtly Love is to be found in historical accounts of the knightly tradition. The knight is seen as being particularly vulnerable

to love melancholy. Continence is virtually impossible for those who are "young, fortunate, rich, high-fed, and idle withal."¹² "Court life fosters love, for it is an easy and idle life; its diet is rich and choice, and it keeps the sexes continually together."¹³ (We remember Andreas' advice to the clergy: preferably a clerk should devote himself absolutely to the service of God, but continual idleness and overabundance of food make one subject to temptation.) Coulton suggests the difficulty of over-emphasizing "the want of privacy in the Middle Ages or the influence of this overcrowding upon social intercourse. . . ."¹⁴

Crane Brinton discusses the decline of the medieval knightly ideal, as all sorts of professionals took over the real work of running things, even the business of war. As a class the knights were left with nothing to do--a class molded and trained for an occupation and a status that had ceased to exist. But the class continued to enjoy its privileges and so had time to indulge in the extravagances of Courtly Love. While giving credit to the troubadours of Provence for the origins of Courtly Love, and recognizing deeper roots in the Greek and Roman cultures, Brinton believes that "the rise of the cult of love and of the woman . . . must have had deep roots in the whole situation of the knightly class: its heritage of excessive masculinity, its counter-acting influence of Christian ideas of love and gentleness . . . , its exasperations, frustrations, and above all, its

increasing divorce from the real work, the real rewards of this world."¹⁵ This idea is reinforced by Sidney Painter when he indicates that "a man would be a better knight if he loved--in fact it was doubtful whether a man who did not adore a lady could be a true knight."¹⁶

While eying skeptically the whole notion of courts of love as historical fact, Will Durant concedes that chivalry ". . . left its decisive mark upon the society, education, manners, literature, art, and vocabulary of medieval and modern Europe."¹⁷ The knight learned manners and gallantry at the king's court, then passed his education on to those beneath him. "Whatever its excesses and absurdities in literature, however far chivalry in fact fell short of its ideals, it remains one of the major achievements of the human spirit, an art of life more splendid than any art."¹⁸

The evidence supplied by both medical and historical writers provides a basis for concluding that for Chaucer's audience the behavior of the courtly lover as seen in Troilus was normal, expected. Troilus is ill; his physical pain and mental anguish are the natural consequence of his malady; and his passion is encouraged by the life he leads as a knight.

Turning now to works written at about the same time as Troilus and Criseyde, we find in The Book of the Knight of la Tour Landry, a didactic book written for the Knight's three daughters in 1371,¹⁹ certain suggestions which support our case. The Prologue opens with a charming account of the

author's musing in his April garden, "all heavy and full of thought in the shadow," the birds' singing making his heart to lighten, causing him to remember his youth and the sorrow and gladness of love. He remembers his wife, dead now for some twenty years, and upon seeing his daughters coming toward him, "had great desire that they should turn to good and worship above all earthly things." He recalls the time "when that I went and rode with my fellows in Poitou . . . and remembered me that my fellows communed with ladies and gentlewomen, the which prayed them of love." He cannot forget the false oaths sworn by the men to the ladies and his own chiding of them. "But what I said unto them it was never the better." Because such fellows still exist, the Knight decides to write his book of instruction "for the great love that I had to my said daughters, the which I loved as father ought to love his child, Having heartily joy to find ways to stir and turn them to goodness and worship, and to love and serve their creator, And to have love of their neighbors and of the world."²⁰

The author concerns himself with giving instructions for proper behavior to his daughters in such matters as faithfulness to their husbands; freedom from jealousy and deceit, bickering and gossip; devotion to the Church, with especial care not to misuse the time at Mass for lecherous purposes. Proper dress and an awareness of the dangers of flattery are stressed. Each lesson is made clear with abundant examples

of those poor creatures who succumbed to the various temptations and paid the price of public revelation.

Thus while the Knight does not approve of the idea of Courtly Love, he evidently recognizes its existence in Poitou, which was the residence for a time of Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughter, Marie of Champagne, who were queens of the courts of love, and he was aware of its practices. Some examples from the text will serve to illustrate.

An account is given of the Galois and Galoises, members of a Provençal love cult, many of whom by the devil's art, and with the help of Venus, goddess of love and of lechery, died of the cold. Their foolish love led to an ordinance whereby they wore heavy winter clothing in the summertime and light summer dress in the winter, with heat and bed coverings according to their dress. Further ordinances decreed that the husband of a Galoise, upon the arrival of a Galois, should take a horse and ride away from home, not returning until the Galois had departed. If the husband were also a Galois and went to see his paramour, another Galoise, then her husband likewise would depart. This style of life lasted a "long while, unto the time that the most part of them was dead and perished of the great cold which they suffered. Many of the Galoys died in their ladies' beds. And so in likewise the Galoyses with their friends and paramours, scorning them that were warm and well clothed."²¹

A long dialogue between the Knight and his wife discusses the matter of paramours. The Knight stresses the idea that "in good love and true, may be but wealth and honor, and also the lover is better than before, and more gay and jolly; and also the more encouraged to exercise himself more oft in arms. And taketh therefore better manner in all estates, for to please his lady or love. And in likewise doth she of whom he is enamored, for to please him the better, as far as she loveth him. And I also tell you that great alms it is, when a lady or damsel maketh a good knight either a good squire."²²

His wife refutes him by saying that words come easily, that they are but sport to the men who mouth them; she charges her daughters not to believe their father in this matter. A woman who is enamoured of a man may not serve God fully, for her time and attention are devoted not to God but to the paramour. She reminds her husband that it was Venus who gave counsel to the Trojans, where Paris' ravishing of Helen resulted in the death of more than forty kings and more than twelve hundred thousand other persons. Further, men who speak of devotion and honor are false deceivers. However, "these be contrary to the faithful and true lovers. For he that loveth with good and true love, as he cometh before his paramour, he is fearful and dreadful lest he do anything to displease her. For he is not so hardy to discover nor say one only word. And if he love her well, I ween that he shall be three or four years ere he dare say his secret unto her."²³

Although the Knight does not approve of the practices in Poitou, he does recognize them as one way of approaching the relationships between the sexes. The influence of Poitou has evidently become strong enough for him to feel that he must deal with it in advising his daughters. Both he and his lady would doubtless approve of Troilus, the faithful lover.

A very different kind of book from the Knight's didactic treatise, Froissart's Chronicles (of France, England, Spain, etc.), help to establish the attitudes of medieval minds toward the courtly lover. Scattered through his records of the wars between the various countries are indications of the behavior of the knight toward his lady.

Early in Book I Froissart tells us that ". . . it was the solemn duty of every knight, especially when appealed to, to help ladies in distress." After Sir John of Hainault had aided Queen Isabella in regaining her throne, feasts were held for fifteen days, after which time Sir John was eager to return home. But the Queen implored him to remain for a time. "This gallant knight wanted to leave no part of his mission unaccomplished, and courteously agreed to stay as long as the Queen wanted."²⁴

One account relates the visit King Edward III paid to Wark castle where he met the Countess of Salisbury, whose husband was imprisoned in Paris. The castle had been under siege by the Scots; King Edward and his troops were advancing with assistance. The Countess met him at the castle door to

thank him for his help and then conducted him into the castle "to entertain him in the best possible manner." The King was struck with her beauty and charm. When alone in his apartment he leaned upon the window in a "profound reverie." When the Countess came to invite him to dinner, she found him "sad and musing." Upon inquiry, he confessed to her his admiration for her "perfections and beauties," and expressed the hope that she would find admirable qualities in him, for her happiness turned on her feeling toward him. She expressed her disbelief that he could so dishonor her or her husband, who had served the King so faithfully. "The next day the King left the castle with regret, in a sadly perplexed state of feeling. . . ."25

Later the account of the marriage of King Charles of France is given. The marriage had been arranged between King Charles and Lady Isabella, daughter of Duke Stephen of Bavaria. The night before meeting her he "never closed his eyes from his desire of seeing her." The Duke of Burgundy, who was part of the King's retinue, reported that the King ". . . was so deeply smitten that he said he could take no rest on account of her whom he wished for his wife, and that the next day would cure all his illness."26

During a time of peace tournaments were held. Froissart speaks directly to the reader: "You know, or must have heard it mentioned, that the intercourse of young gentlemen with the fair sex encourages sentiments of honour and love of fame." Desiring to "advance themselves in the estimation of all

present and especially the ladies," the knights planned tournaments which sometimes lasted as long as thirty days. On one particular occasion French were jousting against English in a tilt highly praised for the strength and endurance of the combatants. The Earl of Huntingdon, Sir John Holland, brother of the King of England, "wished to break another lance in honour of his lady, but it was refused him." He then "quitted the lists to make room for others, for he had run his six lances with such ability and courage as gained him praise from all sides."²⁷

When King Edward III sent fifty of his knights to Valenciennes to accompany the Bishop of Lincoln who was going to negotiate with lords named by the Court of Hainault, "some of the young knights bachelor covered one of their eyes with a piece of cloth, having vowed to various ladies at home that they would see out of only one eye until they had performed some feat of arms in France. They would answer no questions on the subject, and their appearance caused much mystery."²⁸

In his account of the Crusades, Froissart tells of a young Saracen knight whom he praises for his dexterity and gracefulness. ". . . from the gallantry and vigor of his actions the Christians judged he was excited thereto by his affection to a young lady of the country. . . . During the siege this knight performed some handsome feats to testify his love" for the daughter of the King of Tunis, whom he most sincerely loved and who was reported to be very handsome.²⁹

The accounts of Froissart the historian (and Froissart the nearly-hopeless romantic) indicate that the behavior of real knights was not so far removed from the behavior of the literary knight. Just as the King was taken by the Countess' beauty and charm, so Troilus is smitten by Criseyde's beauty:

And sodeynly he wax therwith astoned,
 And gan hir bet biholde in thrifty wise.
 "O mercy, God," thought he, "wher hastow woned,
 That art so fayr and goodly to devise?" (I, 274-277)

And of hire look in him ther gan to quyken
 So great desire and such affeccoun,
 That in his herte botme gan to stiken
 Of hir his fixe and depe impression. (I, 295-298)

As the Saracen knight performed feats to impress his lady, so Troilus fought boldly:

He was, and ay, the first in armes dyght,
 And certeynly, but if that bokes ere,
 Save Ector most ydred of any wyght;
 And this encrees of hardynesse and myght
 Com hym of love, his ladies thank to wynne,
 That altereth his spirit so withinne. (III, 1773-1778)

An important work in the courtly tradition, written at the command and under the direction of Marie of Champagne, and considered by many to be the epic of courtly love, is Lancelot and Guenevere, or La Roman de la Chevalier de la Charette, by Chretien de Troyes of the north of France. Chretien has a definite link with the troubadour ideal in Lancelot's absolute submission and devotion to Guenevere. Lancelot is the amis antiers, the lover who is willing to sacrifice all for love

and who loves even when his love is not returned. Chretien supports the troubadour idea of love as ennobling. Again several examples will serve to illustrate.

Guenevere has been captured by Meleaganz, an enemy of King Arthur. On his way to find and release her, Lancelot loses his mount and at Love's command climbs aboard a cart usually reserved to parade criminals about town and therefore disgraceful. Later Lancelot sees Guenevere riding away with Meleaganz, and he must be restrained by Gawain from plunging out a high window to his death.

Still following, Lancelot falls into a love trance as a result of his thoughts of Guenevere. He meets a maiden who promises him lodging in return for his love, but when Love forces him to be faithful to Guenevere, the maiden praises him and offers her assistance in locating the Queen. As they travel they come upon a spring where they find a comb of gilded ivory containing several strands of hair identified by the maiden as having come from Guenevere's head. Lancelot pales and would have fallen from his mount if the maiden had not supported him. When they leave the spring, the maiden has the comb, and Lancelot has the hair from the comb pressed to his bosom.

The land where Guenevere has been taken may be entered by only two means: the Water Bridge and the Sword Bridge. Lancelot, still in Love's power, chooses the more difficult way, the Sword Bridge, which consists of a gleaming sword two lances long,

with each end firmly embedded in a tree. Lancelot removes his armor and painfully crawls from one end to the other of the sharp edge, Love assuaging his suffering as she leads him across the bridge.

Meleaganz and Lancelot finally meet on the battle field before the tower where Guenevere sits as a spectator. Meleaganz holds the superior position until Lancelot turns to face his beloved. From the sight of her he draws strength and drives Meleaganz to bay. Then Guenevere expresses the desire that Lancelot should stop fighting so hard, and, obedient and submissive, he lets Meleaganz regain the advantage.

The decision is made to postpone the battle for a year. Lancelot comes before Guenevere, who pretends to be angry and refuses to see him. So courteous is he that he does not question her action; instead, he rides away with tears in his eyes. The followers of Meleaganz take him prisoner, and rumors fly back to Guenevere that he is dead. Guenevere thereupon attempts to strangle herself, then goes without food or drink for two days. Word soon reaches Lancelot that she is dead, and he must be restrained by his men from hanging himself. He utters a long lament in which he speaks of the duty of service and obedience on the part of lovers. When the second battle finally occurs, Lancelot defeats Meleaganz and wins the fair Queen Guenevere.³⁰

Again the parallels between Troilus and Lancelot are obvious, and adherence to the code of Andreas is close. We

remember Troilus' submission to Criseyde when she reasons that she will be able to return to Troy after the exchange with Antenor has been made. His love trances and readiness to commit suicide are comparable to Lancelot's; his agony in waiting for Criseyde to return is just as genuine as, if different in nature from, Lancelot's anguish in crossing the Sword Bridge. From his hope, his rationalization that she will return, as well as his earlier joy in love fulfilled, Troilus finds strength for nobility in battle. The picture of the courtly lover is made clear in both Lancelot and Troilus.

Another poem which gives the medieval view of the courtly lover is John Gower's Confessio Amantis, written as the confession of a lover to his priest. Amans, the lover, is making his confession to Genius, the priest of love. The early part of the poem suggests that love is blind, that reason cannot understand love. As the lover presents his case to the confessor, he indicates that he wishes and weeps simultaneously, and longs for death upon waking out of his pain. He prays to Cupid and to Venus for pity, indicating that he has such a malady as would make a wise man mad if it endured long enough.³¹

Genius warns Amans that since it is principally through the eye that peril may befall a man, care must be taken to guard the eye. Amans confesses his guilt of sins of the eye, and admits that he cannot save himself. Also, when he hears his lady's voice, his wit loses direction. Genius warns him

against hypocrisy, but Amans denies his guilt. Rather he insists that "My will were betre a thousandel / Than eny chiere that I cowthe" (I, 728-729). Genius continues by saying "To love is every herte fre" (I, 725), but he warns against deceit, for one will afterward come to repent of it.

The Tale of Narcissus, which warns against pride, tells of the woe of Narcissus when he saw the nymph in the well. Love pierced his heart, and he wept and asked her grace (I, 2338). "He smot himself til he was ded" (I, 2342). The nymphs buried him, and from his grave grew flowers fresh and fair, even in winter. Genius indicates that he who so holds love in disdain, as Narcissus did before coming to the well, is least worthy in Love's eyes and most deceived in his wit.

In the Tale of the False Bachelor, the Roman knight is so overwhelmed by love "that to kniethode more and more / Prouesce auanceth his corage" (II, 2588-2589). He becomes lion-like in his rage against his enemies: ". . . where he rod, / His dedly swerd noman abod, / Agein the which was no defense" (II, 2621-2623).

The entire sixth book of the Confessio deals with the matter of love drunkenness. Amans says that he is subject to it through his sight, his hearing, and his thought. So intense does his desire become when he sees his lady's face that he thinks one hour is three. His praise of her is luxurious: the color of her face is fresher than that of any flower; her brow is wide and wrinkle-free; her eyes are like an heaven;

her lips are red; her chin is well-suited to her face; her neck is round and pure. Yet his desire of her is never fully satisfied.

In addition to sight, hearing is a source of joy, for he hears her praise sung by others: she is wise, good, of worthy blood, and beautiful. More delightful even than hearing her praise from other lips is the sound of her own voice, full of truth and faith. If perchance she should sing, he imagines himself in paradise. Hearing tales of other successful romances, he hopes that his own sorrow may not last forever.

At those times when neither sight nor hearing can bring pleasure, thought can:

This lusti cokes name is hote
 Thoght, which hath euere his pottes hote
 Of loue buillende on the fyr
 With fantasie and with desir. (VI, 913-916)

Every sight and sound comes to him anew as he lies in bed thinking, imagining the sweetness of desires fulfilled. The time for thought he eagerly awaits, for then his hunger is abated as he contemplates the day when he may have the "grete feste."

Finally, in Book VIII, Amans asks for counsel regarding the conduct of his suit. Genius reminds him that love "is blind and can noght knowe / Where that he goeth, til he be falle" (VIII, 2104-2105), and that Love makes his servants blind also. Every man has his own kingdom to rule:

If he misreule that kingdom,
 He lest himself, and that is more than if he loste. . .
 . . . al the worldes good withal. (VIII, 2114-2117)

Genius advises Amans to withdraw his suit and let his heart be governed by reason, not by the will. "Now chese if thou wolt live or deie" (VIII, 2148).

Amans answers that his woe is but a game to Genius, that Genius does not know what the pain of love is. He admits that his reason understands the advice, but his will cannot accept it. The two agree that Venus and Cupid should be called into the case; Amans writes ". . . with the teres of myn ye / In stede of enke . . ." (VIII, 2212-2213), asking them to come to his aid.

Venus appears almost immediately to answer his supplication, and tells him that if one attempts to love and fails he should make a "beau retret" (VIII, 2416), for even if he does attain love it will be for him but an "ydel peine" (VIII, 2418). She also reminds him that he is old: "That which was whilom grene grass, / Is welked hey at time now" (VIII, 2436-2437).

Amans falls into a swoon, during which time he sees a parade of the world's great lovers: Tristan and Isolde, Lancelot and Guenevere, Paris and Helen, Troilus and Criseyde. He also sees those who died for love: Narcissus, Achilles, Agamemnon, Menelaus; Dido, Phyllis, Ariadne, Cleopatra, Thisbe, Candace, Polixena. Those women who remained true to their

husbands appear: Penelope, Lucrece, Alceste, Alcione. Even Aristotle appears:

I syh there Aristotle also,
Whom that the queene of Grece so
Hath bridled, that in thilke time
Sche made him such a Silogime
That he forgat al his logique. (VIII, 2705-2709)

Completing the procession are Vergil, Ovid, and Plato. Amans feels less ashamed, knowing that such wise men have also been claimed by Love. He takes heart that "these olde men with o vois alle / To Venus preiden for my sake" (VIII, 2728-2729).

Ultimately Cupid pulls the fiery dart from Amans' heart and Venus applies a cold ointment to the wound. She then stands him before a mirror where he sees himself pale, thin, sad-eyed, white-haired, and old.

Many parallels can be drawn between the Troilus and the Confessio. Even the very form of the confession is echoed in the ceremony of repentance which Pandarus conducts for Troilus:

"Now bet thy brest, and say to God of Love,
'Thy grace, lord, for now I me repente,
If I mysspak, for now myself I love.'
Thus sey with al thyn herte in good intente."
Quod Troilus, "A, lord, I me consente,
And preye to the my japes thow foryive,
And I shal nere more whyle I live." (I, 932-938)

Amans' complaint that Genius is making a game of his suffering is reminiscent of Pandarus' remark when he tries to get Troilus to confess the name of his beloved: "'A ha!' quod Pandare, 'here bygynneth game'" (I, 868). Genius' warning

against holding love in disdain reminds us of Troilus' attitude toward Love and lovers in his strutting about the temple teasing his men in their despair.

The matter of love drunkenness is mentioned specifically by Criseyde when, upon seeing Troilus ride in from battle with his helmet torn apart, she asks, "Who yaf me drynke?" (II, 651). Through his sight Troilus is made drunk with love. When he sees Criseyde in the temple, he wonders, "O, mercy, God, where have you been?" and becomes drunk with the sight of her. Hearing also contributes to love drunkenness for Troilus. When Pandarus learns that Criseyde is the cause of Troilus' affliction, he is full of praise:

For of good name and wisdom and manere
She hath ynough, and ek of gentillesse.
If she be fayr, thow woost thyself, I gesse.

Ne I never saugh a more bountevous
Of hire estat, n'a gladder, ne of speche
A frendlyer, n'a more gracious
For to do wel, ne lasse hadde nede to eche,
In honour, to as fer as she may strecche,
A kynges herte semeth by hyrs a wrecche. (I, 880-889)

When Criseyde leaves Troilus at Deiphebus' house, Eleyne and Deiphebus praise her excellence, her conduct, her wit, so that it is a joy for Troilus to hear (III, 212-217). Thought also makes its contribution. After spending the first night with Criseyde at Pandarus' house, Troilus returns to his chamber to try to sleep.

But al for noght; he may wel ligge and wyne,
 But slep ne may ther in his herte synke,
 Thynking how she, for whom desir hym brende,
 A thousand fold was worth more than he wende.

And in his thought gan up and down to wynde
 Her wordes alle, and every countenance,
 And fermely impressen in his mynde
 The leest point that to him was plesaunce,
 Desir al new hym brende, and lust to brede
 Can more than erst, and yet took non hede. (III, 1537-1547)

When Pandarus persuades Troilus to visit the castle of Sarpedoun while awaiting Criseyde's return from the Greek camp, Troilus can think only of Criseyde:

For evere in oon his herte piteous
 Ful bisily Criseyde, his lady, soughte.
 On hire was evere al that his herte thoughte,
 Now this, now that, so fast ymagenynge,
 That glade, iwis, kan hym no festeyinge. (V, 451-455)

Like the knight in the Tale of the False Bachelor, Troilus is mighty in battle. Once his confession has been made to Pandarus and plans for winning Criseyde are underway, Troilus goes to war:

But Troilus lay tho no lenger down,
 But up anon upon his stede bay,
 And in the feld he pleyde the leoun;
 Wo was that Grek that with hym mette a-day. (I, 1072-1075)

When he finally realizes that Criseyde has falsed him for Diomede, his wrath is kindled:

In many cruel bataille, out of drede,
 Of Troilus, this ilke noble knight
 As men may in thise olde bokes rede,
 Was seen his knyghthod and his grete myght.

And dredeles, his ire, day and nyght,
 Ful cruwely the Grekis ay aboughte;
 And alwey moost this Diomed he soughthe. (V, 1751-1757)

Both Amans and Troilus write tear-stained letters. At the end of the Confessio Amans is pale, thin, sad-eyed, old. After waiting twice the ten day period for Criseyde to return, Troilus is lean, pale, wan, and so feeble that he must walk with a cane. Once again the courtly lover is seen as behaving in accord with the standard evidently known to those who composed Chaucer's audience.

The foregoing examination of medieval medical accounts, historical records, and works more or less contemporary with Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde indicates clearly that Troilus was behaving in a way completely familiar to Chaucer's audience. Love melancholy was a disease well known to the Middle Ages, and it was expected that one so afflicted would sigh, weep, dream, soliloquize, etc. A modern reader's antipathy for such "unmanly" behavior suggests only the changing standards by which we judge one another, not a mistake Chaucer made in portraying the hero of his poem as a courtly lover.

Indeed, the whole poem centers around Troilus. It is he whom we see in the beginning, strutting through the temple defying Love, and then smitten by Love's arrow. It is he who suffers the psychological anguish of ineptitude and indecision. It is he who soars to heights of joy when his love for Criseyde is consummated, and he who falls to depths of despair when she

is taken from him. Finally, it is he who is taken to his heaven, where he laughs at the folly of mere human love when compared to eternal, divine love.

Of course Troilus is the hero of the poem. Chaucer's artistry and knowledge of human nature are too sure, too perfect, for him to have made an error with Troilus. The most beautiful example of the courtly lover in English literature, Troilus hereby regains his position as the central figure, the hero, of Geoffrey Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde.

FOOTNOTES

¹Brinley Rhys, "A Preface to Chaucer," Sewanee Review, LXXII (1964), p. 338.

²Frederick W. Locke, "Introduction," Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love (New York: Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., 1957), p.vi.

³Locke, "Introduction," p.vi.

⁴Thomas A. Kirby, Chaucer's Troilus: A Study in Courtly Love (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1940), pp. 6-12.

⁵Clives Staples Lewis, The Allegory of Love (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p.195.

⁶Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Knight's Tale," l. 1374, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Fred N. Robinson, ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1957), p. 25.

⁷Lawrence Babb, The Elizabethan Malady (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1951), p. 128.

⁸Geoffrey Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, Book II, ll. 1373-1374, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Fred N. Robinson, ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1957), p. 416. (Further citations to this work will be included in the text of the paper by book and line number.)

⁹Babb, Malady, p.128.

¹⁰Robert Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy (New York: Dutton, 1964), III, 4Off.

¹¹Gregory Zilboorg, M.D., A History of Medical Psychology (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1941), p.267.

¹²Burton, Anatomy, p. 56.

¹³Babb, Malady, p.131.

¹⁴G. G. Coulton, Medieval Panorama (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1944), p.250.

¹⁵Crane Brinton, A History of Western Morals (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1959), p. 186.

¹⁶Sidney Painter, French Chivalry (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1957), p.113.

¹⁷Will Durant, The Age of Faith (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), p. 578.

¹⁸Durant, Age of Faith, p. 578.

¹⁹The Knight mentions also another such book written for his sons, but the book has never been discovered.

²⁰The Book of the Knight of la Tour Landry, trans. by G.S. Taylor (Chipping Camden, Gloucestershire: Alcuin Press, 1930), pp. 1-3.

²¹La Tour Landry, p. 138.

²²La Tour Landry, pp. 139 ff.

²³La Tour Landry, pp. 140-142.

²⁴Sir John Froissart, Chronicles (of France, England, Spain, etc.) ed. and trans. by John Jolliffe (London: Harvill Press, 1967), pp. 14, 21.

²⁵Sir John Froissart, Chronicles (New York: Dutton, Everyman ed., 1930), p.33.

²⁶Froissart, Chronicles (Everyman), pp. 277-278.

²⁷Froissart, Chronicles (Everyman), pp. 465-469.

²⁸Froissart, Chronicles (Jolliffe), p. 71.

²⁹Froissart, Chronicles (Everyman), pp. 478-479.

³⁰Tom Peete Cross and William Nitze, Lancelot and Guenevere (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1930), pp. 3-19.

³¹John Gower, Confessio Amantis, ed. by G.B. McCauley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), Book I, ll. 121-131, p. 5. (Further citations to this work will be included in the text of the paper by book and line number.)

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S
TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF "AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF
CHAUCER'S TROILUS AND CRISEYDE"

The modern reader of medieval literature soon discovers a need for understanding the tradition of courtly love, not only to put himself in proper perspective to the particular work which he may be reading, but also to understand something of the sociological changes which have occurred over the centuries in man's attitudes toward woman.

Geoffrey Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde is perhaps the crown piece of all medieval works on the theme of courtly love. Because of the modern reader's antipathy toward Troilus as the hero of the poem, due to the changing standards by which we judge behavior, it is the purpose of this paper to demonstrate that for Chaucer's audience Troilus was acting properly, in accord with the expected behavior of the courtly lover.

That his audience was completely familiar with the courtly code as set forth in Andreas Capellanus' The Art of Courtly Love is shown by a brief survey of the accounts of certain medieval physicians and historians and by a brief examination of certain medieval works: The Book of the Knight of la Tour Landry, a didactic treatise written by an unidentified French knight to advise his daughters on proper conduct; Sir John Froissart's Chronicles of France, England, Spain, etc.; Chretien de Troyes' Lancelot and Guenevere; and John Gower's Confessio Amantis. Appropriate parallels with the Troilus are drawn.

While the present study is seen as an introduction to a more extensive study to determine the typical, acceptable, admirable behavior of young people in the courts of the Middle Ages, this paper seeks to demonstrate conclusively that Troilus is indeed the protagonist of Troilus and Criseyde and that his behavior was completely familiar and acceptable to Chaucer's audience.